

Indicator RECOMMENDED	Early Initiation of Marijuana Use
Justification	Initiation of marijuana use at young ages, especially in pre-adolescence, has been linked to more intense and problematic levels of use of marijuana and other substances in adolescence and adulthood.
Definition	Percent of students in grades 9 through 12 reporting first use of marijuana before age 13
Data Source	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Frequency	Biennial
Geographic Levels	National and State
Demographic Categories	Grade Level, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity
Strengths	<p>This measure can be defined for all respondents, unlike average age of first use, which can only be defined for users. YRBSS estimates are typically based on larger samples than the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, and can be further broken down by grade level, gender, and race/ethnicity. Some states also collect YRBSS data for individual communities or school districts, which can be compared with their state-level data.</p>
Limitations	<p>A cut-point of 13 years may not be sensitive to changes in average age of first use across the age continuum. As of 2003, weighted representative samples were only available for 32 states. Not all states participate, and some participating states do not provide representative samples. YRBSS is a school-based survey, so students who have dropped out of school are not represented. It is also subject to bias due to self-report, non-coverage (refusal by selected schools to participate), and non-response (refusal/no answer). Estimates for some demographic subgroups may have relatively low precision (i.e., large confidence intervals).</p>